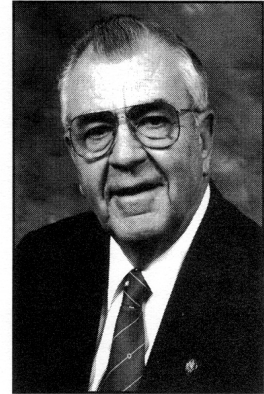


News

Congressman Herbert H. Bateman
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**STATEMENT OF THE
HONORABLE HERBERT H. BATEMAN
SUBCOMMITTEE ON MILITARY READINESS
MARK UP OF H.R. 4205**

Today, the subcommittee meets to mark up the Military Readiness portion of the National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal year 2001.

The good news is that the overall budget proposal reflects the first significant real growth in the defense budget in a decade. I view the increased budget top-line as a long-overdue realization from the Administration that serious and debilitating quality of life, readiness and modernization shortfalls exist, and that fixing them required additional defense resources.

The bad news is that the shortfalls are not only widespread, they are, in fact, getting worse.

Despite fiscal year 2000 defense spending increases, the services' fiscal year 2001 shortfalls have grown to nearly \$16 billion – an increase of more than \$5 billion over just the past year. In addition, the service chiefs now estimate their shortfalls in the fiscal year 2001–2005 period at \$84.2 billion – more than double their February 1999 estimate of \$37.9 billion for the same five-year period.

The Operation and Maintenance Accounts are no different. Although there is recognition of serious readiness shortfalls throughout the military services, the O&M budget request before us today is long on rhetoric and woefully short in reality and, at best, may only slow down the decline in readiness.

The budget request for fiscal year 2001 for operation and maintenance represents an increase in spending of approximately \$3 billion over current spending levels, but none of this increased spending is applied to critical readiness accounts. Of that \$3 billion, increasing fuel prices account for \$1.2 billion of the increase, and the remaining \$1.8 billion represents inflation assumptions of about one percent.

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The reality of the budget request before us is that O&M funding for some of the military services is actually below this year's level, and that in the projections for next year, overall readiness funding declines. Continually underfunding critical readiness accounts will force us to ask our dedicated military men and women to not only do more with less, but to do more with nothing. It is beyond my ability to comprehend how the Department of Defense can sustain acceptable levels of readiness in the military services with the magnitude of underfunded requirements.

In hearings before the subcommittee this year, we continued to hear complaints about spare parts shortages, increased cannibalization rates, inadequate training, decaying infrastructure, and personnel shortages. The subcommittee has once again found that increased funding in these and other critical readiness areas is necessary to reverse the downward trend in military readiness.

In determining the level of increases for next year that are necessary to arrest the decline in readiness, the subcommittee relied heavily on testimony from the military services and the service chief's unfunded priority lists.

As in the past, the subcommittee remains committed to providing adequate funding to several readiness critical accounts that, I believe, must be maintained in order to improve the readiness of the military services. The subcommittee mark before us today continues this effort by recommending an increase of nearly \$600 million in the critical readiness accounts. This includes increases for real property maintenance, for depot maintenance and ship maintenance, for aircraft spare parts; and additional funding for training center improvements and other readiness requirements identified by the subcommittee and the military service chief's. I remain convinced that increases in these critical areas are necessary to not only stem the decline in readiness, but also to provide real improvements in current readiness.

In addition to the funding issues, the mark contains a legislative package that will substantially improve how the DOD conducts its day-to-day business. The mark contains a provisions that would clarify notification requirements in existing law concerning the outsourcing of functions in the military services and industrial activities; a provision that would require the Department to review the causes and remedies associated with the huge backlog of maintenance and repair at military installations; a provision that would require the Department to report to Congress on the movement of funds from critical readiness accounts; and a provision that would revise the requirements of the readiness reporting systems of the Department. The mark also contains a series of provisions dealing with the management of civilian personnel of the Department of Defense.

The mark, again this year, includes a provision that would authorize \$35 million for impact aid for local school districts with large concentrations of children from military families.

I believe that the mark before you achieves the goals that we all share: providing the necessary resources to improve force readiness and enhance the quality of life for the men and women of our armed forces.

I will now recognize Mr. Ortiz, the ranking Democrat on the subcommittee for any opening comments he would like to make.

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